



Gustave Caillebotte

U R B A N I M P R E S S I O N I S T

Los Angeles County Museum of Art June 22–September 10, 1995

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and the Art Institute of Chicago.

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GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE: **URBAN IMPRESSIONIST** commemorates the one hundredth anniversary of

the death of the artist whose *Paris Street; Rainy Day* along with several other scenes of modern Paris stands among the most original works of late nineteenth-century art. Apart from a handful of paintings, however, Caillebotte's art and his contributions to modern painting remain relatively unknown.

Born in 1848 to a wealthy manufacturing family, he trained as a lawyer and later joined the impressionist group when, in 1876, Degas and Renoir invited him to show his work at the second impressionist exhibition. Among Caillebotte's submissions was *Floor-Scrapers*, the painting of common laborers that brought him instant notoriety and made his name synonymous with a bold, new realism. Although controversial because of its daring perspective and audacious subject matter, *Floor-Scrapers* was critically acclaimed for its painterly qualities. In the following year Caillebotte was again praised by critics for his tightly composed and highly finished monumental street scenes, which were more acceptable to the public than the sketchlike and seemingly unfinished paintings by other impressionists, such as Monet and Renoir.

Although Caillebotte's inherited wealth freed him from the financial necessities of exhibitions and sales, he made it his mission to support the impressionists' enterprise. Not only did he purchase paintings from his struggling and unrecognized friends, he organized and subsidized the impressionist exhibitions of 1877, 1879, and 1880.

After 1882, however, growing dissension among the original group of impressionists discouraged him. His interest



increasingly shifted from painting to gardening and building racing boats. He did not participate in the last impressionist exhibition, in 1886, and he subsequently moved to the village of Petit Gennevilliers to retire from the art world of Paris.

In 1894, at the age of forty-five, Caillebotte died suddenly of a stroke. His outstanding collection of impressionist paintings, bequeathed to the French State, was finally accepted after much controversy, and his foresight proved to be invaluable. Caillebotte's collection formed the first "modern art" collection in a national museum and is now the core collection of the Musée d'Orsay. With the exception of *Floor-Scrapers*, the only painting by Caillebotte added to the bequest, the artist's importance as a highly original painter has remained largely unknown. His posthumous reputation as a painter has been overshadowed by his role as a great collector and benefactor.

Gustave Caillebotte: Urban Impressionist brings the artist to the forefront and highlights the full range of his work. This retrospective includes numerous paintings and drawings that have remained with the Caillebotte family, many of which have never been seen publicly. Organized both chronologically and thematically, these works reflect the artist's attraction to modern life: the interiors and exteriors of his residences in Paris and the suburbs; the bridges and boulevards of the "new" Paris; and the flowers and animals he fashioned into extraordinary still-life paintings at the end of his life. As seen in the exhibition and accompanying catalogue, Caillebotte's ambitious paintings offer a fresh vision, which should be recognized as a unique contribution to the impressionists' achievement.



BANKS OF A CANAL IN ITALY

c. 1872

Oil on canvas

40 x 60 cm (15³/₄ x 23⁵/₈ in.)

On loan from the

John M. and Sally B. Thornton Trust

IN 1872 GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE in the company of his father visited Italy. Only two known paintings illustrate this journey, during which the young artist had time to admire works of the past and perhaps familiarize himself with contemporary Italian painting. In this picture Caillebotte used a strong focal point, thus conferring on his composition an almost geometric quality, a feature he would develop in many later pictures. In contrast to his later compositions, however, the paint here was applied tightly, in a manner reminiscent of the Macchiaioli, a group of Italian plein-air artists whose works are often compared with those of the impressionists.

NUDE RECLINING ON A DIVAN

1873

Pastel

87 x 113 cm (34¹/₄ x 44¹/₂ in.)

Iris and B. Gerald Cantor

LIKE MOST IMPRESSIONIST PAINTERS, Caillebotte had a brief academic training; fashionable society painter Léon Bonnat (1834–1923) successfully prepared him for the competitive enrollment into the École des Beaux-Arts, to which Caillebotte was admitted in 1873. Although no records indicate that he actually followed the curriculum provided at the school, the young artist apparently engaged in some of the traditional activities associated with teaching there, among which was drawing the nude from a live model. Executed the year of his admission, this fully accomplished pastel bears many nonacademic traits. Its medium, to begin with, is slightly unorthodox for the school, which required artists to draw the nude in charcoal. Furthermore, this is not an “official” model sitting in front

of a class but rather a hired model posing in the intimacy of the artist’s studio. Because of its ambitious size and highly finished quality, it has sometimes been advanced that the young Caillebotte was intending to submit this work to the jury of the Salon. The proportions of the figure, who appears somewhat diminutive on the oversize bed, prefigure Caillebotte’s treatment of the female nude in later paintings.



FLOOR-SCRAPERS

1875

Oil on canvas

102 x 146 cm (40¹/₈ x 57¹/₂ in.)

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

REJECTED BY THE JURY OF THE 1875 SALON, this painting, which depicts men scraping the floors of a Parisian apartment, was submitted by Caillebotte the following year to the second impressionist exhibition. Thereafter, Caillebotte would be identified with *Floor-Scrapers*, which was the only one of his works to enter the French national museum at the time of his bequest.





WITH THIS PORTRAIT of his youngest brother, René, Caillebotte first broached the theme of looking out at Paris, which later played a prominent role in his work. Turned away from the viewer, René assumes the pose, often associated with romanticism, of a person communing with nature. In Caillebotte's painting, however, it is not nature that captures his attention but the man-made spectacle of the new city.

YOUNG MAN AT HIS WINDOW

1875

Oil on canvas

117 x 82 cm (46 x 32 1/4 in.)

Private collection



ON THE PONT DE L'EUROPE

1876

Oil on canvas

65 x 81 cm (25⁵/₈ x 31⁷/₈ in.)

A California collector

ALONE AMONG THE IMPRESSIONIST PAINTERS Caillebotte executed drawings and small-scale oil studies as preparation for his larger compositions. The Pont de l'Europe is a bridge above the railroad tracks of the Gare Saint-Lazare in Paris. It was built between 1865 and 1868 and was thus still a somewhat unfamiliar element in the Parisian landscape when Caillebotte painted it in 1876. Many impressionist painters lived in proximity to the station. Manet and Monet also used it as the background or subject of their own compositions. This oil sketch relates closely to the finished painting now in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, which was the second large painting of this subject Caillebotte executed.

PARIS STREET; RAINY DAY

1877

Oil on canvas

212.2 x 276.2 cm (85 1/2 x 108 3/4 in.)

The Art Institute of Chicago,
Charles H. and Mary F. S. Worcester Collection

IN 1877 CAILLEBOTTE EXHIBITED *Paris Street; Rainy Day* and *The Pont de l'Europe*, two monumental and painstakingly executed street scenes that contributed considerably to his reputation as a painter of modern Paris. In these cityscapes he brilliantly realized a poetic vision of the complexity of contemporary urban life.





A BALCONY (A BALCONY, BOULEVARD HAUSSMANN)

1880

Oil on canvas

69 x 62 cm (27¹/₈ x 24³/₈ in.)

Private collection

MORE THAN ANY OTHER IMPRESSIONIST, Caillebotte was attracted to the urban landscape as seen from a balcony or window. These highly organized views of Paris alternate between paintings with a precise, narrative style and more spontaneous works, such as this balcony scene, painted with the lighter, broken brush strokes associated with the impressionist aesthetic.

STILL LIFE OF FLOWERS IN FRONT OF A BALCONY

c. 1880

Oil on canvas

65 x 81 cm (25⁵/₈ x 31⁷/₈ in.)

Private collection, courtesy
Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

IN THIS STILL LIFE Caillebotte combined a vase and an informal arrangement of flowers strewn on a table with some of his favorite themes: an open window, a balustrade, and a precipitous view of a street. This anthology of the artist's repertoire may have been prompted by an attempt on Caillebotte's part to impress the original recipient of the

work, the painter Edouard Manet, to whom Caillebotte gave the painting in 1880. After Manet's death, his widow, assuming that the still life was the work of her husband, wrote on it, "Certified by the hand of my husband, widow Edouard Manet." While it was included among the works of Manet by one of his cataloguers, A. Tabarant, the painting was not accepted by most scholars. It was rediscovered only recently and rightly reattributed to Caillebotte. This is the first time the painting is being exhibited.





FRUIT DISPLAYED ON A STAND

1880-82

Oil on canvas

76.5 x 100.5 cm (30¹/₈ x 39⁷/₈ in.)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fanny P. Mason Fund in memory of Alice Thevin

CAILLEBOTTE'S UNIQUE VISION transformed even the most traditional subjects: portraits, nudes, and still lifes. Here he presents a decorative arrangement of fruit as if seen by a person walking by a store window on a Parisian market street.

THE PLATE OF PEACHES

1882

Oil on canvas

38 x 46 cm (15 x 18 1/8 in.)

Private collection, Santa Monica

CAILLEBOTTE'S STILL LIFE OF RIPE PEACHES is resting on a tablecloth, the creases of which establish a gridlike pattern reminiscent of the artist's *Study of Paving Stones* (1877). If the stark presentation of the fruit immediately calls to mind Paul Cézanne's contemporary depictions of apples, the location of the subject in a specific environment—the freshly opened tablecloth implying the neatness of a bourgeois dining room, a subject Caillebotte depicted on several occasions—differentiates Caillebotte's realistic still life from Cézanne's more abstract compositions.

This painting was presented by the artist to his friend Jules Dubois, whose portrait he executed in 1883.



IN 1887 CAILLEBOTTE LEFT PARIS for a house he had owned for some years in Petit Gennevilliers, not far from the capital itself. There he enjoyed sailing at nearby Argenteuil (a location that had inspired Monet and Renoir some years earlier) and tending his garden. By then Caillebotte was no longer the “urban impressionist” of his earlier years; his interest in gardening is reflected in the many floral still-lives he executed at the time. Likewise his passion for boating is exemplified in many paintings. He also represented his house (now destroyed) on several occasions. In this composition he introduced a female figure, that of his companion, Charlotte Berthier, and a dog (without which Caillebotte was rarely seen), thus adding a personal note to the depiction of his garden.



THE DAHLIAS, GARDEN OF PETIT GENNEVILLIERS

1893

Oil on canvas

157 x 114 cm (61³/₄ x 44⁷/₈ in.)

Lent anonymously

RELATED EVENTS

- *Sunday, July 9, 1 P.M.*
Leo S. Bing Theater

J. Patrice Marandel, curator, European painting and sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, presents "Caillebotte: An Introduction."

- *Sunday, August 20, 1 P.M.*
Leo S. Bing Theater

Celia Marriott, associate director, museum education/media programs, the Art Institute of Chicago, speaks on "Caillebotte and Contemporary Art."

TOURS

- *Docent Tours*

Docent tours of the exhibition are offered Tuesdays–Thursdays at 1 P.M. and Fridays at 7 P.M. Special VIP docent tours for groups of twenty-five or more can be booked for Mondays at 1 or 2 P.M. The cost is \$20 per person. Reservations must be made in advance by calling (213) 857-6108.

- *Audio Tour*

An audio tour is available for the exhibition and may be purchased for \$4.

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TICKETS

- *Museum members* receive unlimited free admission to the exhibition for two adults and your children under 18. Simply show your current membership card at the entrance of the exhibition. For members' information, call (213) 857-6151.
- *For all others* advance and same-day tickets (if available) can be purchased at the museum ticket office during regular museum hours beginning June 22, 1995. Adults, \$6; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+, \$4; children/younger students, \$1. Children 5 and under are admitted free.
- *Groups of ten or more* visiting during regular museum hours should call the museum ticket office for information: (213) 857-6110.

Smaller groups and individual visitors may reserve their tickets in advance by calling Ticketmaster after May 22: (213) 480-7676. (A convenience charge will be applied to each telephone order.)

PROVISIONS FOR THE HANDICAPPED

All public areas and galleries are accessible, and restrooms have special facilities. Barrier-free education programs for visitors with disabilities and older adults are available by advance appointment; inquire at the information desk or call (213) 857-6130.

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